

Dangerous Mistakes a Christian Makes, Part 5 - Acts 25:23-27 – May 9th, 2010

- This is part five of a study titled "Dangerous Mistakes a Christian Makes," and it will conclude both this series and this chapter in Acts.
- We're studying how the Apostle has avoided making dangerous mistakes in the face of false accusations and unjust imprisonment.
- We see this with the first one we looked at, where Paul avoids making a dangerous mistake that could have ultimately cost him his life.

1. We try to win favor in the eyes of the world (Verse 9)

- Festus, motivated by wanting to win favor with the Jews asks Paul who desires to win the Jews to go back to Jerusalem and stand trial.

2. We become easily intimidated by the world (Verse 10)

- Paul is neither manipulated nor intimidated by Festus when he boldly declares he should be tried there, he hasn't done anything wrong.

3. We are unwilling to lose our lives in this world (Verse 11a)

- Here, Paul says something astonishing to Festus when he tells him that if he's guilty of anything deserving death, he won't refuse to die.

4. We refuse to take risks to win the world (Verses 11b-12)

- Paul takes a risk and makes an appeal to one Caesar Nero who eventually becomes known as the most evil Roman emperor in history.

5. We don't trust God's goodness despite evil in the world (Verses 13-15)

- Festus discusses Paul's case with King Agrippa, who's in an incestuous relationship with his half sister and has an evil family history.

6. We won't defend the faith against the world (Verse 16)

- Festus says that Paul should be able to defend himself which he's actually already done in his defending of and contending for the faith.

7. We can't see God's providence in the world (Verses 17-22)

- After Festus finishes telling Agrippa about Paul, Agrippa asks to hear Paul speak, which plays perfectly into the providence of God.

8. We haven't let our weakness confound the world (Verses 23-24)

23 The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high ranking officers and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 24 Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

- v23 Agrippa and Bernice with high ranking officials enter the amphitheatre with great pomp then Festus commands Paul be brought in.
- v24 Festus addresses King Agrippa and all present saying; "you see this man," the Jews in Jerusalem and Caesarea want him dead!

- Oh how I would've loved to have been a fly on one of those walls. Picture the scene here in your mind's eye. What a stark contrast.
- First, you have the pompous King Agrippa and all these important officials enter with their entourage, then Paul is just brought in.
- This "ugly little Jew" who stands before this big pompous king in this jam packed amphitheatre is about to confound every one of them.

- By the way, lest you think I am being disrespectful to the beloved Apostle, I'm actually quoting the famous French infidel, Voltaire who was the first to describe Paul as an "ugly little Jew."
- One writing describes the mighty apostle as "A man rather small in size, bald-headed, bow-legged, with meeting eyebrows, a large, red and somewhat hooked nose."

2 Corinthians 10:10 For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." NIV

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. KJV

"I'm against the idea of putting the "big preachers" on tape and playing them back to the congregations that feel they are being starved by listening to "little preachers." Fallacy, brethren--a thousand times, fallacy! If we could have the Apostle Paul on tape recordings and let him stand here and preach, he could do no more for you than the Holy Ghost can do, with The Book and the human conscience.... Oh, brethren, I would not detract from God's great men, but I can safely say that that's not what the church needs. The church needs to listen to the inner voice and do something about it!"

A.W. Tozer, The Tozer Pulpit, Volume 1, pp.108-109

- Herein lies the "why" behind the "what" God does. In other words, God does this with Paul in His way, in His time, for His glory.
- It's for this reason David defeats a Goliath, and it's why Gideon's 300 man army of Israelites defeats a 135,000 man army of Midianites.

9. We fail to see the dilemma we present to the world (Verses 25-27)

25 I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. 26 But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. 27 For I think it is unreasonable to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him."

- v25 After saying how the Jews wanted Paul dead Festus says he's done nothing to deserve that and is sending him to Rome to appeal.
- v26 Festus reveals his motive behind this investigation by explaining his dilemma. He has no definitive charges on Paul to write Caesar.
- v27 He states to this large audience it's unreasonable for him to send Paul as a prisoner without specifying the charges against him.

- Like the Savior before him, the Apostle isn't the one who's on trial here; rather, those before whom he stands are the ones on trial here.
- We do err when we make the mistake of thinking we stand trial before the world. It's the world who is standing trial before God's Word.
- Like Festus, the world has a dilemma with the Paul's of this world. They can't specify charges against the righteousness of God's Word.

- Now, about now, you're sort of feeling like the world's biggest failure because you've been guilty of making these mistakes and more.
- Well, I would like to encourage you because you are not alone. Actually, you're in good company with the men and women in the Bible.
- Many of the men and women who were mightily used of God had some really bad problems, and made some really bad mistakes.

One had aptly noted that; "NOAH was a drunk. ABRAHAM was too old. ISAAC was a daydreamer. JACOB was a liar. LEAH was ugly. JOSEPH was abused. MOSES had a stuttering problem. GIDEON was afraid. SAMSON had long hair, and was a womanizer! RAHAB was a prostitute! JEREMIAH and TIMOTHY were too young. DAVID committed adultery and was a murderer. ELIJAH was suicidal. ISAIAH preached naked. JONAH ran from God. NAOMI was a widow. JOB went bankrupt. JOHN the Baptist ate bugs. PETER denied Christ. The Disciples fell asleep while praying. MARTHA worried about everything. MARY MAGDALENE was, well, you know ... The SAMARITAN WOMAN was divorced ... more than once! ZACCHEUS was too small. PAUL was too religious. TIMOTHY had an ulcer ... AND LAZARUS WAS DEAD!"

- Ultimately and amazingly, the failures of all these men and women in the Bible, actually fulfill the purposes of our God.
- Have you ever wondered why we're given such graphic detail of man's failures in the scriptures?
- I believe it's to show us Who God is and how God is with people, and how He works out man's failures to fulfill His purposes.
- The Bible is not so much about what man does against God; it's much more about what God does for man.
- David's sin against God is recorded for us to show us God's grace for David.

- God's purpose is fulfilled in man's failures beginning with Adam. It fulfilled God's purpose in sending the second Adam, Jesus Christ.
- Sprinkled throughout scripture from front to finish is one true story after another of how God is able to miraculously fulfill His purpose.
- It's not just that God does it; it's the way God does it. He fulfills His purpose, not just in spite of, but because of man's failures.

"Why does God show us the failures of these great leaders? Could it be that He wants us to know that in spite of our fiascos, He can still make something glorious out of our lives? ... I consider Jacob's biography one of the most interesting of them all. Here is why: Numerous times throughout the Bible, God reminds His people that He is "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:15). In fact, in this same verse, God says, "This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation." Toward the end of his journey God changed Jacob's name, which means "deceiver," to Israel meaning "Prince of God." So, why doesn't He say, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and ... Israel"? How strange! How come He associates His name with a cheat who wasted two decades trying to do things his own way? Through His name, His very identity, God wants to say to you and me, "I am still the God who makes failures into Princes of God. I remain the God who takes broken lives – people with multiple divorces, sick in body because of sin, in prison for decades, labeled as losers, crazy folk nobody wants, outcasts with no hope --- and turns them into something beautiful."

K.P. Yohannan, "It's a New Day, God's Answer to Our Failures." p10